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How much benefit?

The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spent over \$350 million to raise part of an obsolete 1958 Soviet submarine from a depth of over three miles in the Pacific. The project took six years and consumed one-third to one-half the amount the agency is believed to get from Congress for one year.

That is a gigantic dollar amount to sink in one project. At best it could produce nothing more up-to-date than an obsolete 1968 Soviet code machine and some 1968 nuclear weapons.

The incident testifies to the failure of the congressional watchdogs to watch, and the failure of the CIA to inform more than four of the tamer watchdogs.

In mid-1973, Editorial Research Reports tried to assemble the best estimates for federal spending on the various components of that vast secret empire, the "intelligence community."

Here are the estimates, in millions:

CIA	\$775-\$1,000
Defense	\$130
Army	\$775
Navy	\$775
Air Force	\$2,800
Nat'l Security Agency	\$1,300

What does the country get for this enormous expenditure? The public is denied an accurate assessment because the intelligence establishment shrouds itself in secrecy. Even the senior member of the Senate committee charged with "overseeing" the CIA did not know about the sub-raising project.

The public has had to take on faith that its cloak-and-dagger operatives act responsibly and know what they are doing. Do they? The disclosures of illegal mail-opening and other illegal domestic surveillance provide no basis for confidence. The FBI, the agency subjected to the closest congressional scrutiny, is now discovered to have spent years trying to disrupt the minuscule Socialist Workers party with tactics ranging from the bizarre to the despicable.

The decision to sink more than a third of a billion dollars into the submarine project raises questions about what else the CIA and the other intelligence agencies have been up to. Fortunately, Congress seems determined to get the facts. It needs to look behind the "national security" labels and make hard-headed appraisals of value received.